

# My Bridge of Strength/GAP



**MY BRIDGE OF STRENGTH (MBS)  
AND  
GOAL ACTION PLAN (GAP)  
New Counselor and Brush-up Training 2017**



**RAMSEY  
COUNTY  
Workforce Solutions**

# Today's Outline



We're going to:

- Talk about 2014 paradigm shift
- Talk about the importance of MBS and GAP to implementation of new vision
- Talk about the relationship of MBS and GAP to EP
- Practice MBS and GAP use

# Training Focus Points



## What we know

- [Group Discussion]

## What we want to know

- [Group Discussion]

# 2014 Paradigm Shift A



In early 2013, Ramsey County, wanted to find a way to improve MFIP employment services and noted an absence of research demonstrating that the very limited number of recognized MFIP work activities correlated with strong employment outcomes.

Beginning in 2014, Ramsey County focused on participant agency, choice, and pairing the MFIP work activities more closely with coaching, education (especially GED or high school diploma), certificate and credential building, mentoring, and retention services.

As the implementation deepened, the concept of 4E's - Engagement, Education, Employment, and Employment Retention – as success indicators developed.

# 2014 Paradigm Shift B



This family-centered, participant-driven and outcomes focus led to shifting roles for coaching and counseling; the linkage between coaching and goal-setting; on-going use of Motivational Interviewing; self-determination, recognizing and incorporating cultural attributes and strengths, and sanction as a tool in the mix with others.

The My Bridge of Strength (two versions) and Goal Action Plan (two versions) were developed as key tools for the participant to self-identify needs, dreams, strengths, goals and actions to reach their desired future.

# Language Shift



## Moving from...

- Prescribed goals
- Case management
- Core Activities
- Assessment
- Increased numbers
- Crisis management

## To...

- Individualized goals
- Coaching
- Meaningful activities
- Conversation
- Increased engagement
- Lifelong Learning

# Coaching and Counseling Roles A



Each role discovers the participant's values; uses a strengths-based approach to goal-setting; and learns the participant's skills, abilities, styles and preferences. Each role is person-centered, relationship-based and employment goal focused.

Regardless of role, the employment counselor is expected to listen for the participant's defined needs, to incorporate participant-centered planning into the development of clear measurable goals, and corresponding pathways to obtain those goals.



# Coaching and Counseling Roles B



## Coaching Role

The coaching role is rooted in the belief that the participant is the expert in their own life; the participant, with support, comes up with their own answers to their questions. Coaching and goal-setting go hand-in-hand

## Counseling Role

In the counseling role, the counselor provides advice and educates the participant about choices. The counseling role is more direct with possible solutions than the coaching role. The counseling role helps direct the participant's job search and selection of the right career path. The counseling role utilizes resources such as lists of possible trainings and careers.



# Desired MBS and GAP Results



Turning *barriers* to employment into *challenges*.

Participants are able to increase their internal resources. We're born with an ability to develop skills - listening, speaking, thinking, completing paperwork, addressing unexpected problems, set short- term and long-term goals, participating in group collaborative efforts and team meetings, accurately computing numerical data, communicating effectively in a group. Use their skills to be a leader in their community.

“See one, Do one, Teach one.”

# How MBS differs from EM



## Employability Measure

- Subjective (Counselor rates the level the participant is at after the meeting)
- Tool for Counselor
- Completed once
- Helps EGC gather information
- Interview-based
- Participant unaware of assessment
- Distinct case note structure

## My Bridge of Strength

- Objective (Participant chooses statement most closely reflecting their situation during the meeting)
- Tool for Participant
- Ongoing (at least 1x annually or more often as needed)
- Help participants focus and prioritize goals
- Interactive, engagement based
- Transparent and appeals to visual, tactile and auditory learners

# My Bridge of Strength

Name:

Case Number:

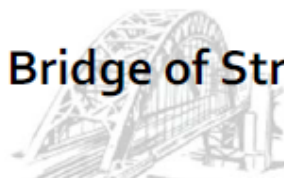
Date:

Family Stability			Well-Being			Education	Financial and Legal		Employment
Housing	Dependent Care	Transportation	Health	Children's Behavior	Social Support	School	Financial	Legal	Workplace Skills*
I have stable and safe housing unsubsidized housing.	I have reliable child care and backup.	I have reliable transportation and backup.	No health concerns affect my employment.	Behavior does not limit my employment.	I have consistent and effective social support and/or a leadership role in the community.	I have at least an AA degree or higher.	My income is stable, I am current on my bills, I have money for saving or spending.	I have no legal issues.	My strong workplace skills enhance my employability and support career advancement.
I have stable and safe housing that is subsidized.	I have reliable child care but no backup.	I have reliable transportation but no backup.	Health concerns sometimes affect my employment.	Behavior sometimes affects my employment.	I have generally reliable social support that is growing.	I have a high school diploma, GED, or entry-level certificate or a post-secondary certificate.	My income is stable, I am current on my bills, but I don't have money for saving or spending.	My legal issues are not work related and do not take work time.	My workplace skills support my employability.
I am living in temporary housing, unsafe housing, or am at risk of losing housing.	I have child care but it is not reliable.	I have transportation options but they are not reliable.	Health concerns often affect my employment.	Behavior often affects my employment.	I have a limited social support network with few positive influences.	I am attending high school, GED, entry-level certificate classes, or other training.	My income is sometimes enough to cover my basic living expenses.	My legal issues take my away from work sometimes.	My workplace skills often interfere with my employability.
My family has no housing.	I have no child care.		Health concerns prevent my employment.	Behavior prevents my employment.	I have no social support; my network is draining or destructive.	I have no high school diploma, GED, or entry-level certificate.	My income is not enough to cover my basic living expenses.	I work certain jobs, or I have lost jobs because of my legal issues.	I need to work on my workplace skills in order to obtain employment.

**Strengths:**

\*Workplace Skills examples: decision making, communication, conflict resolution, problem solving, anger management, time management, crisis management, planning, relationship skills, prioritizing, grooming, and other capabilities that facilitate job performance.

# My Bridge of Strength



Name:

Case Number:

Date:

Family Stability			Well-Being			Education		Financial	Legal	Work
Housing	Child Care	Transportation	Health	Children's Behavior	Social Support	School	Language	Financial	Legal	Workplace Skills*
I have stable and safe housing that I <b>pay for on my own</b> .	I have <b>two or more</b> child care options that I can count on (daycare, family).	I have <b>two or more</b> transportation options that I can count on (car, bus, carpool, walk, etc.).	I can go to work/school and have <b>no</b> family health concerns.	Behavior <b>does not</b> make it hard to go to work/school.	I have people that I feel are <b>always</b> there for me and/or I am seen as a <b>leader</b> in my community.	I <b>finished</b> HSD/GED (or equivalent) or higher. Where? _____	I am fluent in <b>three or more</b> languages.	I am <b>able</b> to pay my bills.	I have <b>no</b> legal issues.	I <b>have</b> the skills to find and keep a job.
I have stable and safe housing, and have <b>some help to pay</b> for it (public housing, family, etc.).	I have <b>one</b> child care option that I can count on.	I have <b>one</b> transportation option that I can count on.	I have <b>some</b> health concerns that make it hard to go to work/school.	Behavior <b>sometimes</b> makes it hard to go to work/school (calls from school, etc.).	I have people that I feel are there for me <b>most</b> of the time, and am meeting new people that are good for me.	I have gone to <b>some</b> school.	I am fluent in <b>two</b> languages.	<b>Most</b> of the time I am <b>able</b> to pay my bills.	I have <b>some</b> legal issues that take me away from work.	I have <b>some</b> skills to find and keep a job, but need some help.
I am living in a <b>temporary place</b> (shelter, moving from place to place, etc.).	I do <b>not</b> have child care that I can count on.	I do <b>not</b> have transportation.	I have <b>many</b> health concerns so work/school is hard.	Behavior <b>makes it hard</b> to go to work/school (frequent calls from school to pick up child, etc.).	I do <b>not</b> have people in my life that are good for me.	I have <b>not</b> gone to school.	I am fluent in <b>one</b> language.	I am <b>not able</b> to pay all of my bills.	I <b>have</b> legal issues that make it hard to go to work/school.	I need to <b>learn</b> skills to get or keep a job.

Strengths:

\*Workplace Skills examples: able to think before you act, remember information while starting new tasks (ex. follow 2-step directions), control emotions, paying attention even with distractions, start new tasks without delay, plan ahead, decide what to focus on first, keep track of information (organize), be on time, follow through with goals, change plans without feeling too much stress.

# Procedures



- Purpose of MBS is explained to participant.
  - Purpose: to help participants identify areas of strength and possible areas to focus on or reinforce.
- MBS is completed during initial meeting(s) with any participant that is new to a counselor (regardless if they have completed MBS in the past). Participant circles the item where they think they are “at” in column.
- Participant and counselor have a conversation, and go through each pillar together. Participant chooses the statement that they feel is most representative of their situation.
- Strengths that participant have within themselves are discussed and listed on MBS form.
  - It is the counselor’s role to assist with identifying strengths as needed by asking questions and providing feedback (not checklists, etc).



# What If My Participant is in Crisis?



- Perhaps these participants are the ones that would benefit the most
- Allows for participants to *focus* on one area of their life, when life is overwhelming
- Encourages the participant to break down daunting tasks into more achievable steps

# Strengths, Strengths, Strengths!



## Use MI skills to draw out strengths

- “If we asked your best friend/parent/significant other, what would they say were your greatest strengths?”
- As participants explain situations they have been through in their life that they perceive as negative, encourage them to see what was they gained from it (ex. learning experiences, building strengths)

## Link these strengths to their accomplishments and goals

- Discuss when they have used these strengths in the past and how they may apply them to their current situation.
- Which of your goals can you use your strengths and abilities?

Use coaching skills to help the participant set goals





## Discussion:

Introducing MBS  
to Participant

Read off statements  
and discuss  
strengths and  
weaknesses of each  
introduction  
approach.

Decide together  
how to introduce  
MBS to the  
participant.

- “So we have this thing, it is called My Bridge of Strength, I am going to hand this to you, and I would like you to circle whatever you think is best.”
- “I am going to work on your plan, while I am doing that, fill this out. If you have any questions just ask.”
- “Okay so this is your homework: fill out this bridge and we will go over it when you get back.”
- This is a bridge that identifies different areas of your life. We are going to go through each section together and have a conversation.
  - Tell me more about your living situation . Please circle whichever statement most closely reflects your current situation.
- Other considerations:
  - Completing MBS with/without interpreter
  - Completing with participants who are unable to read the content



## **“Non-Negotiables”**

As counselors,  
what do we  
need to hold  
ourselves  
accountable for  
while working  
with a  
participant on  
their MBS

- Always presented in a strength-based, participant centered manner
- Focus on foundational pieces and the relationship-building process – initial stages of the bridge are for engagement
- Conversational and completed together (participant talking more than counselor, not question and answer)
- Belief in the tool and desire to work together with participant
- Participant always chooses for themselves (no right or wrong answer)
- Be present, authentic, flexible, and respectful
- Non-judgmental, safe environment
- Coach!



## Case Study: Suzy



- Suzy's Story:
  - 29 year old female
  - 3 children ages 8, 6 and 2
  - MFIP months used: 20 months
  - Recently back on MFIP after being off 12 months
  - Has a reliable vehicle, sees the bus by her home but has never used it
  - Suzy and children live with Suzy's parents in a house.
  - Suzy is responsible for \$200 per month rent to her parents
  - Suzy received 2 school phone calls regarding the 6 year old's behavior last month
  - No child care in place besides her parents who will watch her children in the evenings and weekends
  - High school diploma completed, no additional training
  - Suzy's childhood friend lives next door
  - Suzy has an unlawful detainer
  - Suzy has past traffic violation, no outstanding fines/fees
  - 3 years of consistent employment with fast food, recently quit employment at Target, currently working at a temp service
  - Suzy reports no safety or health concerns



## Case Study: Suzy's MBS

Pass the ball activity

- Introducing and completing the MBS with the participant.
- Practice, Practice, Practice...

# Suzy's MBS

## My Bridge of Strength

Name: Suzy  
Case Number: 555555

Date: 6/1/15

Family Stability			Well-Being			Education	Financial and Legal		Employment
Housing	Dependent Care	Transportation	Health	Children's Behavior	Social Support	School	Financial	Legal	Workplace Skills*
I have stable and safe housing, unsubsidized housing.	I have reliable child care and backup.	I have reliable transportation and backup.	No health concerns affect my employment.	Behavior does not limit my employment.	I have consistent and effective social support and/or a leadership role in the community.	I have at least an AA degree or higher.	My income is stable, I am current on my bills, I have money for saving or spending.	I have no legal issues.	My strong workplace skills enhance my employability and support career advancement.
I have stable and safe housing that is subsidized.	I have reliable child care but no backup.	I have reliable transportation but no backup.	Health concerns sometimes affect my employment.	Behavior sometimes affects my employment.	I have generally reliable social support that is growing.	I have a high school diploma, GED, or entry-level certificate or a post-secondary certificate.	My income is stable, I am current on my bills, but I don't have money for saving or spending.	My legal issues are not work related and do not take work time.	My workplace skills support my employability.
I am living in temporary housing, unsafe housing, or am at risk of losing housing.	I have child care but it is not reliable.	I have transportation options but they are not reliable.	Health concerns often affect my employment.	Behavior often affects my employment.	I have a limited social support network with few positive influences.	I am attending high school, GED, entry-level certificate classes, or other training.	My income is sometimes enough to cover my basic living expenses.	My legal issues take my away from work sometimes.	My workplace skills often interfere with my employability.
My family has no housing.	I have no child care.		Health concerns prevent my employment.	Behavior prevents my employment.	I have no social support; my network is draining or destructive.	I have no high school diploma, GED, or entry-level certificate.	My income is not enough to cover my basic living expenses.	I work certain jobs, or I have lost jobs because of my legal issues.	I need to work on my workplace skills in order to obtain employment.

### Strengths:

reliable, strong, loyal, resilient, good mom, communication skills, people person

\*Workplace Skills examples: decision making, communication, conflict resolution, problem solving, anger management, time management, crisis management, planning, relationship skills, prioritizing, grooming, and other capabilities that facilitate job performance.



# Break



# Goal Planning



## What Goals do\*

Goals direct (one toward task relevant behavior)

They energize and encourage persistence

They motivate people to discover and use task relevant knowledge and skill

Goals serve the role of motivating an individual to action, so long as the individual values the goal and the probability of success is high\*

## What the Participant does

Participant identifies and choose their own goal to focus on leading to increased engagement and overall success

## What the Counselor does

Coach the participant as assistance to their goal-setting

\*Richard Guare, PhD



# SMART Goals



- ***Specific*** - What will the goal accomplish? How and why will it be accomplished?
- ***Measurable*** - How will you measure whether or not the goal has been reached?
- ***Attainable*** - Do you have the necessary skills, knowledge and resources to accomplish this goal without it defeating you?
- ***Relevant*** – What is the purpose of accomplishing this goal in your life?
- ***Time-Limited*** – In order for an applied sense of urgency, what completion date has been established?

# Two Options for Goal Action Plan



## Goal Action Plan

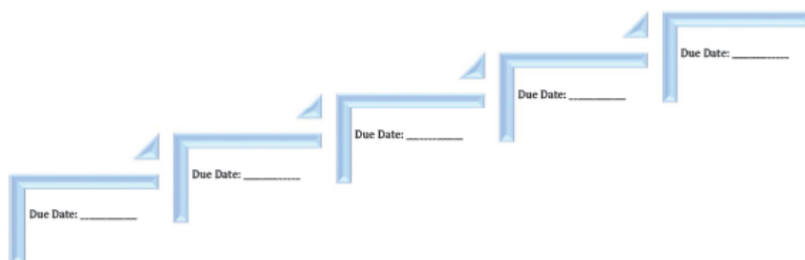
Participant's Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Case Number: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

My Goal is: \_\_\_\_\_ Due Date: \_\_\_\_\_

What strengths will I use to accomplish my goal: \_\_\_\_\_

Check the goal and action steps against SMART criteria: ☐ Specific ☐ Measureable ☐ Attainable ☐ Relevant ☐ Time-based

Instructions: Once you develop your goal, identify the action steps that you will need to achieve along the way. Your action steps should also meet the SMART criteria.



Date of next appointment: \_\_\_\_\_ Was this goal obtained or discontinued?: ☐ YES ☐ NO If yes, date: \_\_\_\_\_

If no, what stopped you? \_\_\_\_\_

version 1-1.13.17



## Goal Action Plan

Participant's Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Case Number: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

My Goal is: \_\_\_\_\_ Due Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Check the goal and action steps against SMART criteria (all must be checked):

☐ Specific ☐ Measureable ☐ Attainable ☐ Relevant ☐ Time-Limited

Instructions: Once you develop your goal, identify the action steps that you will need to achieve along the way. Your action steps should also meet the SMART criteria.

STRENGTH ASSOCIATED	ACTION STEPS TO ACHIEVE YOUR GOAL	TARGET DATE	DATE COMPLETED	SMART CRITERIA
	1. _____			<input type="checkbox"/> S <input type="checkbox"/> M <input type="checkbox"/> A <input type="checkbox"/> R <input type="checkbox"/> T
	2. _____			<input type="checkbox"/> S <input type="checkbox"/> M <input type="checkbox"/> A <input type="checkbox"/> R <input type="checkbox"/> T
	3. _____			<input type="checkbox"/> S <input type="checkbox"/> M <input type="checkbox"/> A <input type="checkbox"/> R <input type="checkbox"/> T
	4. _____			<input type="checkbox"/> S <input type="checkbox"/> M <input type="checkbox"/> A <input type="checkbox"/> R <input type="checkbox"/> T
	5. _____			<input type="checkbox"/> S <input type="checkbox"/> M <input type="checkbox"/> A <input type="checkbox"/> R <input type="checkbox"/> T

Date of next appointment: \_\_\_\_\_ Was this goal obtained or discontinued?: ☐ YES ☐ NO If yes, date: \_\_\_\_\_

If no, what stopped you? \_\_\_\_\_

version 2 - 1.12.17

# Procedures: Goal Action Plan



- Participant identifies a “pillar” of their life to focus on
- Through coaching, the participant and counselor determine a goal
- Through coaching, the participant and counselor create SMART steps together
- If used, identify incentives
- Set next appointment
  - Frequency of meetings
- GAP referenced in employment plan
- Participant brings GAP back with them to next appointment (copy also kept in file)



## **Personal and Professional Goals Activity**

### Instructions

Write down one personal, or one professional SMART goal on the Goal Action Plan provided.



## Suzy's Goal

Small group  
activity –  
complete  
Suzy's  
SMART goal  
and GAP

After Suzy completes the MBS with her counselor, she has decided that her main focus is to secure full-time employment



# Case Study: Suzy's GAP

RAMSEY COUNTY/WORKFORCE SOLUTIONS

## GOAL ACTION PLAN

Participant's Name: Suzy Case Number: 555555 Date: 6/1/15

My Goal is: Select Daycare Center for my children + submit Due Date: 6/17/15

What strengths will I use to accomplish my goal: Strong, good communication skills, necessary application document- People Person, Reliable, action

Check the goal and action steps against SMART criteria: ☒ Specific ☒ Measureable ☒ Attainable ☒ Relevant ☒ Time-based

Instructions: Once you develop your goal, identify the action steps that you will need to achieve along the way. Your action steps should also meet the **SMART** criteria.

Research CC  
Providers,  
follow-up with  
CC list: openings,  
distance, on  
school bus  
route?

Due Date: 6/4/15

Set up  
appointments,  
Tour 2-3  
CC providers

Due Date: 6/12/15

Choose a  
CC provider

Due Date: 6/13/15

Complete CC  
application  
including  
immunization  
Records + submit  
to provider

Due Date: 6/15/15

Complete Ramsey  
County CC  
application + Fax  
to 651-266-3931

Due Date: 6/17/15

Date of next appointment: 6/17/15 Was this goal obtained or discontinued?: ☐ YES ☐ NO If yes, date: \_\_\_\_\_

If no, what stopped you? 2pm

# Employment Plans



- Employment plans will remain largely unchanged.
- MBS – No reference of the MBS in EP needed
- When GAP is completed – statement in EP in comment section:
  - “Follow through with ongoing goal action plans.”

Hand out the MBS & Gap Guide



# Example Employment Plan



See handout

# Case Note in WF1



- The counselor writes a detailed case note “telling the story” of the meeting including explaining each area on the MBS discussed with the participant.
- **Workforce One case note type:** Counseling and Guidance
- **Case note subject line:**
  - Enter the letters MBS in the subject line of the case note if the MBS was completed during the meeting that is being case noted.
  - Enter the letters GAP in the subject line of the case note if the GAP was completed during the meeting that is being case noted.
  - If both the MBS and the GAP were completed during the meeting that is being case noted, include both acronyms in the subject line.

# Example Case Note



See handout

# Participant Case File



- MBS – Participant takes their MBS with them, a copy is also kept in their case file.
- To celebrate the participant's accomplishments, review the MBS (showing progress).
  - The MBS is also useful to reference when there is a lack of progress or to help the participant center their focus and identify goals.
- GAP – Participant takes their GAP with them, a copy is also kept in their case file.

# Closing the Loop



Where to find this information?

<https://www.ramseycounty.us/your-government/departments/economic-growth-and-community-investment/workforce-solutions/dwp-mfip-snap-provider-resources>

# Review of Expectations



**MBS for New Participants** - Each new participant should have completed an MBS within first 3 months of assignment to counselor. Introduce MBS during initial meetings. The MBS helps inform the Employability Measure.

**MBS for Existing (Incumbent) Participants** - Each incumbent participant should now have an MBS and GAP completed. If not, discuss a target and strategy for accomplishing this soon with your Supervisor.

**GAP** – Coaching guided goal setting is required for those participants who have identified goals through the use of the MBS – regardless whether a new or incumbent participant. The GAP is a tool that helps the participant center their focus on the goal setting steps. Rule of thumb: if an MBS is completed, a goal setting process is to be initiated then or shortly thereafter; the Gap captures the action.

See the ***MBS and GAP procedure*** for details of the required steps.

# Questions?



Now?  
Ask Us

Future Questions?  
Ask Your Supervisor



# Feedback



Please complete the training evaluation form

# THANK YOU...



**FOR YOUR PRESENCE AND CONTRIBUTION  
TOWARDS MAKING THIS SESSION SUCCESSFUL,  
AND FOR THE WORK THAT YOU DO IMPACTING  
OUR FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES**